



Many Voices Working for the Community

Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Teachers Become Students to Learn About Stewardship

Oak Ridge, Tenn., March 3, 2006—A group of area high school teachers spent some time recently as students learning how to use a new teaching resource called the Stewardship Education Resource Kit. The kit is designed to educate students about the science, history, and cleanup of contaminated areas around Oak Ridge where work was done in nuclear weapons development and research.



Area high school teachers search the Internet for information related to stewardship of lands containing hazardous or radioactive wastes.

A great deal of hazardous and radioactive material was generated over four decades of work. Some of that waste must be left in place to be protected and monitored for decades to come. The kit explains why long-term stewardship of those areas is important and how it is achieved.

The kit was developed by the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board (ORSSAB), an independent group of citizen volunteers that

provides recommendations and advice to the Oak Ridge office of the Department of Energy on its cleanup activities on the Oak Ridge Reservation.

Two dozen ecology and environmental science teachers representing public and private high schools in Knox and Anderson County spent a Thursday evening and a snowy Saturday in early February learning how to use the kit in the classroom. Workshop leaders explained how to use each lesson, showed videos included with the kit, and demonstrated the use of support materials and related Internet websites.

The teachers participated in group activities and listened to a panel discussion on stewardship that included representatives from ORSSAB, the Department of Energy, and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation.

The kit has five lessons and an appendix. Lecture notes allow teachers to become familiar with the material before presenting it. Each lesson includes support materials to keep the topic interesting, such as crossword puzzles and maps.

The kit also includes two videos. “The White Hole” is a thought-provoking animated film about unforeseen consequences of waste disposal. “The Manhattan Project” is a documentary of the effort to build the first atomic bomb, in which Oak Ridge played a pivotal role.

The appendix provides additional resources, including a glossary of terms, a CD of historical photographs, a list of acronyms, a list of Internet sites related to long-term stewardship, a presentation explaining the need for stewardship, and several games and puzzles.

At the conclusion of the workshop almost all of the participants said they would begin using the kits in their classrooms. “I think you should continue to do this and expand it beyond just ecology and environmental science into other subject areas, like history and social studies,” one teacher remarked.

“This workshop was the first public rollout of the kit” said Heather Cothron, ORSSAB member. “Our goal was to introduce the teachers to the kit and provide a tool to help students understand how history, science, and citizenship are interrelated.”

ORSSAB member Donna Campbell said, “The importance of conveying information about the nature, extent, and location of contamination to future generations is essential to proper handling of the contaminated land now and in the future. It’s our generation that must take responsibility to ensure this process is in place.”

“The Department of Energy’s Environmental Management Program in Oak Ridge couldn’t be happier with the success of the kit and the teacher’s workshop,” said Pat Halsey, the Board’s Federal Coordinator. “We totally support this concept and encourage its incorporation into the local school systems’ curricula.”

Based on interest from those who attended, the Board plans to gather a focus group of workshop teachers in the near future to learn how the kit is being used in the classroom.

The lessons in the kit are not just for teachers and students; they’re available to everyone. Individuals can access the kit materials on the ORSSAB website (<http://www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab/stewardship-kit/kit.htm>). Organizations that have an interest in stewardship and the environment may request a version of the kit.

More information about the kit and ORSSAB is available at the Board’s web site at www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab or by calling (865) 576-1590.

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